



NATHAN FARRAGUT TWINING

15 August 1957 — 30 September 1960

Nathan Twining was born in Monroe, Wisconsin, on 11 October 1897. His family later moved to Oregon, where he joined the National Guard in 1916 and saw service along the Mexican border. Rising to first sergeant in the Guard, Twining won appointment to the US Military Academy in 1917. As the result of an accelerated wartime program, he graduated just over a year later in November 1918.

After initial infantry assignments, Twining attended flight school and transferred to the Army Air Service in 1926. During the next several years, he was a flying instructor and then served with pursuit and attack groups stationed around the country and in Hawaii and with the Army Mail Service. After he completed the Air Corps Tactical School and the Army Command and General Staff School, he was Air Corps Technical Supervisor at the San Antonio Air Depot. Staff assignments with the Office of the Chief of the Army Air Corps in the years 1940 to 1942 rounded out his experience and brought promotion from major to brigadier general.

General Twining began his World War II combat experience in July 1942 as Chief of Staff of the US Army Air Forces in the South Pacific area. In January 1943 he assumed command of the Thirteenth Air Force and in February was promoted to major general. While flying a B-17, Twining crashlanded in the Coral Sea. He and his crew floated in rubber life rafts in shark-infested waters for six days and five nights before being rescued. In July 1943 he became Commander of Aircraft, Solomon Islands, one of the first combined air commands in US history, with tactical control of all Army, Navy, Marine, and Allied Air Forces in the South Pacific.

General Nathan F. Twining
United States Air Force



Brigadier General Twining, following his rescue after six days and five nights adrift in a rubber raft in the Coral Sea, February 1943.

In late 1943 Twining was transferred to the Mediterranean theater, where he assumed command of the Fifteenth Air Force and the Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Forces. His Allied command not only supported operations in Italy and southern France but also conducted bombing raids against Germany, Austria, and Romania. With the surrender of Germany, Twining returned to the Pacific. Now a lieutenant general, he commanded the Twentieth Air Force. Forces under his command launched B-29 attacks against the Japanese home islands, and planes under his command dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

After World War II, Twining commanded the Air Materiel Command at Wright Field in Ohio. With the creation of the US Air Force in 1947, he took command of the newly established Alaskan Command. In 1950 he joined the Air Staff. After serving briefly as Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, he received his fourth star and assumed duties as Vice Chief of Staff.

In 1953 General Twining became Chief of Staff of the Air Force. In that position, he worked diligently for the development of aircraft, missiles, and weapons for his service. In 1956 President Dwight Eisenhower selected him to lead a delegation of technical experts



Major General Twining, *center*, in Italy with Lieutenant General Carl A. Spaatz, *left*, and Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, *right*, 1944.

invited to inspect Soviet air facilities. This was the first visit by US officers to the Soviet Union since World War II.

General Twining became the third Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 15 August 1957. Just ten days after he took office, the Soviet Union announced the successful launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile and, less than two months later, placed the first artificial earth satellite, *Sputnik*, in orbit. It appeared that the Soviet Union had or would soon have the capability to launch missile attacks against the United States. General Twining endorsed steps to strengthen and protect strategic retaliatory forces but saw no

reason for the large accelerated buildup favored by the Air Force. Twining was confident that the Strategic Air Command was superior to its Soviet counterpart. He opposed any major change in US strategy and, like his predecessor Admiral Arthur Radford, remained a firm advocate of the Eisenhower policy of main, but not sole, reliance on nuclear weapons.

Three crises occurred while Twining was Chairman. The first one began on 14 July 1958, when a coup toppled the pro-Western government in Iraq. The president of neighboring Lebanon, concerned about maintaining his regime, appealed for US assistance. Radical



General Twining makes a statement to the press before his trip to the Soviet Union, July 1956.

Arab nationalism, encouraged by the USSR, appeared to threaten Western interests. Speaking for the Joint Chiefs, Twining told President Eisenhower that he saw “no alternative but to go in.” The President promptly decided to act. Marines began landing at Beirut on 15 July, followed by Army troops. With the arrival of approximately 14,000 US personnel, enough stability existed for Lebanese factions to work out a political

compromise and for US forces to withdraw by the end of October.

Another crisis soon followed in the Far East when the Chinese Communists began bombardment of the Nationalist-held islands of Quemoy and Matsu off the Chinese mainland. With the eruption of this crisis during August 1958, General Twining and the Chiefs quickly agreed that the United States should not permit the loss of the islands to the

communists. They recommended the use of whatever force was necessary, including atomic weapons. General Twining forcefully presented their recommendations to the President. Eisenhower agreed that a show of force was needed but took great care to keep his military options open. He ordered the Seventh Fleet, plus two carriers from the Mediterranean, to the Formosa Strait and provided convoy protection in international waters for Chinese Nationalist supply ships bound for the offshore islands. The show of force, combined with various political initiatives, worked. The bombardment ceased and the crisis passed.

The third crisis came in November 1958, when the USSR announced its intention to transfer its access and occupation functions in East Germany to the East German government unless West Berlin became a demilitarized "free city" within six months. President Eisenhower responded with a firm but low-key approach. Twining told the President that the JCS feared that the United States would "go half way" in meeting Soviet provocations and "then quit." They believed that the United States had to be ready to risk general war. Some Service Chiefs favored a major

mobilization, but Twining told the Chief Executive that he saw no need to go that far. President Eisenhower, however, held resolutely to his low-key approach, and the Soviets backed away from their deadline.

During 1959 and 1960 General Twining played a central role in working out new procedures for coordinating nuclear strike plans. The advent of land-based missiles and *Polaris* submarines to complement the bomber fleet created major complications in target assignments, command, and control. Twining collaborated with Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates to create the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff and the Single Integrated Operational Plan, arrangements which lasted throughout the Cold War.

Following major surgery, General Twining elected to retire on 30 September 1960, midway through his second term, before a new administration took office. During the next decade he worked as vice chairman of the publishing firm Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. In 1966 the firm published Twining's views on the state of national defense under the title *Neither Liberty nor Safety*. General Twining died on 29 March 1982 at Wilford Hall Medical Center, Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

Nathan Farragut Twining

General, USAF

Promotions

Dates

	Temporary	Permanent
2LT	01 Nov 18	
1LT	01 Jan 20	20 Nov 23
CPT.	20 Apr 35	01 Sep 35
MAJ	07 Oct 38	01 Jul 40
LTC	22 Jul 41.	12 Nov 42
COL	01 Feb 42	
BG	17 Jun 42	10 Jul 46
MG	05 Feb 43	19 Feb 48
LTG.	05 Jun 45	
GEN	10 Oct 50	

Assignments

Dates

	From	To
Assigned duty, US Military Academy, West Point, NY	1918	1919
Tour of Observation, France, Belgium, Italy and Germany	1919	1919
Student, Basic Course, Infantry School; then Commanding Officer, 'C' and later 'B' Companies, 29th Infantry, Camp Benning, GA	1919	1922
Aide-de-Camp to BG B. A. Poore, Camp Travis, TX, Fort Logan, CO, and later Fort Sam Houston, TX	1922	1923
Student, Air Service Primary and later Advanced Flying School, Brooks and Kelly Fields, TX.	1923	1924
Instructor, Air Corps Primary Flying School, Brooks Field, TX, and later March Field, CA . . .	1924	1930
Adjutant and Commanding Officer, 18th Pursuit Group and later Commanding Officer, 26th Attack Squadron, Schofield Barracks, HI . .	1930	1932
Pilot and Operations Officer, 8th Attack Squadron; then Pilot and Commanding Officer, 90th Attack Squadron; then Pilot and Mess Officer, 60th Services Squadron, Fort Crockett, TX	1932	1934
Engineering Officer, Central Zone, Chicago, IL. . . .	1934	1934
Post and Group Adjutant and later Commanding Officer, 3d Attack Group, 3d Attack Wing, Headquarters Detachment; then Assistant Operations Officer, 3d Wing, Barksdale Field, LA.	1934	1935

Assignments	Dates	
	From	To
Student, Air Corps Tactical School, Maxwell Field, AL	1935	1936
Student, Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, KS	1936	1937
Air Corps Technical Supervisor, San Antonio Air Depot, Duncan Field, TX	1937	1940
Assistant Chief and later Chief, Technical Inspection Section, Office, Chief of Air Corps; then Assistant Executive Officer, Chief of Staff of the Army Air Force, Washington, DC.	1940	1942
Chief of Staff, US Army Air Forces; then Commanding General, Thirteenth Air Force, South Pacific	1942	1943
Commanding General, Fifteenth Air Force, Mediterranean Theater	1943	1945
Temporary Duty with Headquarters, Army Air Force (Liaison and Planning, Headquarters US Army Strategic Air Force), Washington, DC	1945	1945
Commanding General, Twentieth Air Force, Pacific .	1945	1945
Commanding General, Air Materiel Command, Wright Field, OH	1945	1947
Commander in Chief, Alaskan Command, Fort Richardson, AK	1947	1950
Acting Deputy Chief of Staff (Personnel); then Vice Chief of Staff; then temporarily assumed duties of Chief of Staff; then resumed duties as Vice Chief of Staff, US Air Force, Washington, DC	1950	1953
Chief of Staff, US Air Force, Washington, DC. . . .	1953	1957
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC. .	1957	1960

Principal US Military Decorations

Army Distinguished Service Medal (with oak leaf cluster)
 Navy Distinguished Service Medal
 Legion of Merit (with oak leaf cluster)
 Distinguished Flying Cross
 Bronze Star
 Air Medal (with oak leaf cluster)
 Commendation Ribbon